



# Customer commitments

This document sets out the services that you can expect from us as your landlord, for:

- ▶ Your tenancy
- ▶ Your home
- ▶ Your neighbourhood and community
- ▶ Your involvement
- ▶ Value for money
- ▶ Equality and diversity

Residents have helped us to design these commitments, because we recognise that our customers are best placed to tell us what is important and what can be improved.

They also reflect the national standards set by the housing association regulator Homes England. All our commitments are measurable against those standards, meaning we can monitor our performance in service delivery and be accountable to our customers.

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## We're a Fair Landlord

As a not-for-profit organisation, the rent that we receive is invested in homes and services for our customers and communities.

We are a Fair Landlord. What that means is that at the heart of our decision making we make fair choices about services that are fair for the majority of our customers. In practical terms, we continually identify savings so that we can keep doing the work that is important to you.

These commitments reflect our Fair Landlord approach.

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## Your tenancy

### Preparing the property, advertising and allocation

We will:

1. Advertise properties both on-line and through traditional methods.
2. Be clear in those advertisements about practical and relevant information relating to the property and the area in order for potential customers to make an informed choice.
3. Provide a menu of housing options for all applicants, with fully trained staff who will assist you.
4. Let our properties through an allocations policy that recognises housing need.

## From the start of your tenancy

We will:

1. Give you clear information about your tenancy.
2. Provide clear information on your rent account and a range of payment methods.
3. Provide housing support services within our sheltered schemes and offer support to vulnerable people living in our general rented properties.
4. Support vulnerable people who are eligible, in their own homes, enabling them to live rewarding, fulfilling and independent lives.

## During your tenancy

We will:

1. Provide a number of services that support you to maintain your tenancy such as employment and money advice.
  2. Provide and actively promote free access to housing exchange schemes for eligible customers and support you through that process.
  3. Work in partnership with other agencies to actively prevent homelessness, under occupation and overcrowding.
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## Your neighbourhood and community

We understand that the quality of your local area is as important as the quality of your home.

### Managing your neighbourhood

We will keep your scheme and communal areas clean and safe by:

- ▶ Providing a cleaning and grounds maintenance service that we monitor and review regularly.
  - Cleaning of blocks – depending on where you live, communal areas in your block will be cleaned **weekly, fortnightly or monthly**
  - Grass is cut **once per month** in March and October and **twice monthly** between April and September
  - Paths swept after each cut
  - Hedges are trimmed either side of the bird nesting season, the winter cut is in February and the summer cut is in August.
  - Hardstanding is kept weed and litter free
  - Weed control takes place on **alternate months** – residual weed spray is applied **twice yearly**
- ▶ Responding to reports of fly tipping, needles and graffiti

### Working with partners for the benefit of your area

We will:

- ▶ Work closely with relevant partners (for example the police and local authorities) to promote social, environmental and economic well being in your local area.
- ▶ Work with those same partners and local residents to improve and support local services.

## Managing anti-social behaviour

We will:

- ▶ Work in partnership with other public agencies to prevent and tackle anti-social behaviour in your neighbourhood.
    - High risk cases involve threats of, or actual violence, criminal damage or hate crime. We will respond to high risk cases within **one working day** and develop an action plan with the customer within **two working days** of this contact. We will respond to low risk reports of ASB within **three working days**
  - ▶ Contact all customers involved in these cases to agree an action plan and frequency of contact that is appropriate for you and the situation.
  - ▶ Publish an anti-social behaviour policy.
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## Your home

We will ensure that the standard of your home meets the Government's Decent Homes Standards and our Lettable Standard. That it is safe, secure and clean, with no outstanding repairs.

### If something needs repairing in your property

We provide an efficient, accessible and cost effective responsive repairs and maintenance service for your home:

- ▶ Emergency repairs, where there is a risk to life, threat of serious injury or damage to the property – we will attend within **four hours** to make safe.
- ▶ Routine repairs – we will complete within **17 days**.
- ▶ External property works such as guttering and fencing that are not covered by the home MOT – we will complete within **30 days**.
- ▶ Major works, where the work will take more than a day to complete or will cost in excess of £500 – we will complete within **60 days**.

We will always aim to get the repair right, first time.

### Home improvements

We publish a planned maintenance schedule setting out when homes will be eligible for a range of improvements including new kitchens and bathrooms, replacement boilers and home MOTs. To find out when your property is eligible visit our website, click My home - useful leaflets and forms and search for 'planned improvements'.

### Gas heating repairs

Where you have no heating or hot water, an uncontrollable water leak or report of a gas leak – we will attend within **six hours** and seek to complete your repair at this point.

Should it not be possible to repair your heating during this initial visit we will complete:

- ▶ Combi boiler repairs with **five days**.
- ▶ Solid or oil fuel appliances, or solar thermal system repairs within **ten days**.
- ▶ Non-urgent repairs, such as a room thermostat or radiator valve within **15 days**.

## Meeting all statutory requirements relating to health and safety of your home

We will:

- ▶ Ensure that there is an appropriate programme of testing and remedial works in place.
  - ▶ Carry out a programme of preventative works relating to fire and other risks where appropriate.
  - ▶ Contact you directly to arrange annual safety inspections and servicing of our appliances, such as gas boilers.
  - ▶ Ensure that our customers are able to continue to live independently wherever possible in their own homes through the provision of a coordinated, multi-agency adaptations service, where required and where eligible.
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## Involving and empowering our customers

A customer-focused approach is at the heart of everything we do. We pride ourselves on listening to the views of our customers and treating you in a polite, professional and informative manner.

### We offer customers a choice of how you can communicate with us

We will:

- ▶ Aim to make contacting us as easy as possible, by:
  - **Visiting us in person** – we have ample free car parking and accessible buildings, open between Monday and Friday. Our friendly reception team will deal with your enquiry in person
  - **Web and email** – our websites are easy to use and offer an email option if you can't find the information you need. The website is available 24/7 and you can contact us by email
  - **Telephone** – we will answer the phone promptly in our customer services centre. Outside of opening hours we have a dedicated out of hours provider, to handle emergency repairs
    - **75% of all telephone calls will be answered within 30 seconds** and we always aim to answer your query with the first person you speak to
    - You will receive a response within **48 hours** if your query needs passing to another team
  - **Social media** – we provide Facebook and Twitter accounts, with personal messaging options.
- ▶ Work in partnership with customers to monitor how effective these choices are and listen to your suggestions for further improvements.
- ▶ Aim for **90% satisfaction** with customer services.

### Our approach to complaints is clear, simple and accessible

We will:

- ▶ Actively publicise our approach to complaints and feedback.
- ▶ Aim to resolve complaints quickly, acknowledging complaints within **two working days** and responding in writing within **10 working days**.
- ▶ Ensure we learn from complaints and publish lessons learnt.
- ▶ Welcome compliments on our service, pass them to the staff involved and use them to improve our services.

## **We provide you with accessible, relevant and timely information**

We will:

- ▶ Tell you how you can access our services and what choices you have.
- ▶ Show you how we are performing against these commitments.
- ▶ Keep you up-to-date with progress of your requests, for example on your repair.
- ▶ Tell you how you can communicate with us.
- ▶ Be clear on our responsibilities as a landlord and your responsibilities as a customer.

## **We support and encourage you to be effectively involved and to help us improve**

We will:

- ▶ Work in partnership with involved customers (e.g. those on our customer or scrutiny panels) when we carry out service reviews.
- ▶ Provide training courses and seminars to increase the skills of engaged customers.
- ▶ Offer you a wide range of opportunities to be actively involved in influencing the way your home is managed by:
  - Publicising the options that are available
  - Providing copies online and produce copies on request
  - Providing different engagement channels that suit different lifestyles
- ▶ Provide appropriate support throughout your involvement, including arranging transport, meeting out of pocket expenses and other specific requirements you may have.
- ▶ Agree with involved residents the appropriate training requirements to suit their involvement choices.

## **We ensure that customers are involved in the design and delivery of services**

We will:

- ▶ Listen and consider your views about the ways we can improve services.
  - ▶ Ensure that your feedback is an integral part of the evaluation, design and implementation of services.
  - ▶ Regularly review policies that affect customers and include customer feedback where applicable, as part of the process.
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## **Value for money**

We will consult, listen and respond to you and ensure the delivery of our services represents good value for money.

We will:

1. Listen to your feedback on services and use it to improve.
  2. Complete service reviews to make sure that the services continue to be efficient.
  3. Review the cost of service delivery to make sure you are getting good value for money.
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## Equality and diversity

We are committed to valuing diversity and providing equal access to services for everyone. We do everything we can to be at the forefront of good practice in equality and diversity issues.

We will:

- ▶ Treat you with fairness and respect.
- ▶ Understand the different needs of our customers.
- ▶ Comply with all requirements under the Equalities Act 2010.
- ▶ For customer services:
  - Provide a hearing loop system in reception
  - Offer correspondence in larger print when it's needed
  - Provide information in other languages, on request
  - Provide access to information in large print, speech mode, other languages and simplified format through the Browsealoud facility on our websites



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## Reporting our performance

We will tell you how well we have performed against these service commitments once a year, in our Annual Report to tenants.

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## Reviewing our commitments to customers

As our services are reviewed, we will involve residents in that process.

You can help us to shape our commitments, by:

- ▶ Feeding back to us when you have an improvement suggestion.
- ▶ Getting involved through our Let's Talk programme. For more information about the opportunities available contact the customer voice team on **0300 300 0059** or email **letstalk@housingplusgroup.co.uk**.

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